

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 20 – 38 are pending in the application.

The Examiner is thanked for pointing out the incorrect reference numeral on page 7 of the specification; correction has been undertaken.

The Examiner has objected to the drawings as failing to show how the receivers open and close as described in the specification. However, it is respectfully submitted that various mechanisms for opening and closing a receiver are readily known to one of ordinary skill in the art, and can, for example, be in the form of an external gripper or of an inner hole gripper. It should also be noted that the opening and closing of the receivers 42 to 47 (see the paragraph bridging the bottom of page 8 and the top of page 9 of the specification) is given only as an example. The receivers could also, for example, draw or hold the substrates that are to be conveyed by means of a vacuum. Thus, any drawing showing an exemplary operation of a generally known opening and closing mechanism for grasping substrates would therefore be just that, merely an exemplary showing. It is therefore respectfully requested that the need for any additional drawing to show how a known receiver opens and closes (a variety of different mechanisms for which are known) be withdrawn.

The Examiner is also thanked for his helpful suggestions with regard to the locations of the receivers along an imaginary circle; appropriate amendments have been made.

The Examiner is furthermore thanked for the indication that claim 30 would be allowable. However, in view of the following comments, it is respectfully submitted that all of the pending claims 20 – 38 should be allowable.

With regard to Applicants' independent claim 20, the apparatus defined therein comprises a conveying device 3 for a linear transport of substrates, and at least one rotatable handling device 4, 5; 4a for transporting substrates between the conveying device 3 and the processing stations, wherein the conveying device is disposed between the processing stations.

The Examiner has rejected, among others, claim 20 as being anticipated by Harada. This reference discloses an apparatus for processing semiconductor wafers in various processing sections, with the wafers being supplied to and removed from the various processing sections by means of a substrate transferring device (main arm) 10. The handling device or main arm 10 is provided with a substrate gripper that removes the wafers from a stationary loading/unloading section 2 and transports them to the individual processing sections. The substrate gripper itself is linearly moveable via suitable movement units in the X, Y and Z directions, and is rotatable about the Z axis.

The Examiner has characterized the element 33 of Harada as "a conveying device for the linear transport of substrates". However, it is respectfully submitted that this element is actually a "common convey path 33", and does not serve for the linear transport of the substrates themselves, as required by Applicants' claim 20, but rather for the linear transport of the substrate gripper.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the apparatus of the present application is distinguishable from the Harada reference in that Applicants' claim 20 provides for a "separate" conveying device for the linear transport of substrates, and at least one rotatable handling device for transporting substrates between the "linear" conveying device and the processing stations. Due to the fact that the rotatable handling

device of Applicants' claim 20 provides for the transport of the substrates between the "linear" conveying device and the processing stations, it is clear that Applicants' apparatus as defined in claim 20, provides for two separate devices, each of which conveys the substrates. In contrast, Harada provides only a single handling device that, by means of suitable movement units, is linearly moveable in several directions, and is also rotatable. Thus, Harada clearly does not have a conveying device for the linear transport of the substrates. Thus, Harada also cannot teach or disclose such a nonexistent conveying device between at least two processing stations, and it is furthermore not possible for Harada to provide a rotatable handling device above such a nonexistent conveying device; however, Applicants' claim 20 requires that the at least one handling device 4, 5; 4a be disposed above the conveying device 3. Such an arrangement as defined for Applicants' apparatus of claim 20 makes it possible in a straightforward and economical manner, with a low requirement for space, to supply a plurality of processing stations; this situation is described in detail in the specification of the present application.

Thus, as indicated above, the element 33 of Harada does not serve for the linear transport of the substrates, but rather for the linear transport of the handling device itself. It is therefore respectfully submitted that the handling device of Harada also cannot provide for the transport of the substrates between the conveying device and the processing stations, as required by Applicants' claim 20. Thus, pursuant to the last paragraph of MPEP section 2131, Harada cannot anticipate Applicants' claim 20 because it does not teach every element of that claim. Similarly, pursuant to MPEP section 2143.03, Harada cannot make Applicants' claim 20 obvious because it does not teach or suggest all of the claim limitations of such claim.

In view of the foregoing discussion, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the allowability of all of the pending claims 20 – 38. In addition, should the Examiner have any further comments or suggestions, the undersigned would very much welcome a telephone call from him in order to discuss any outstanding issues and to expedite placement of the application into condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments